



No compromises
ON THE ESSENTIALS

MUNICIPAL ELECTION – *choose the voice of sense!*

**MUNICIPAL ELECTION PROGRAMME
2025**



Kristillisdemokraati
Christian Democrats

| | |
|---|-----------|
| No compromises on the essentials | 3 |
| 1. The big issues in daily life are decided nearby | 4 |
| 2. Finland's vitality is generated in municipalities | 6 |
| Local governments' economic prospects are difficult | 6 |
| A vibrant municipality has entrepreneurship and work | 9 |
| Good public procurement brings efficient services | 11 |
| Employment management and successful integration are a great opportunity | 12 |
| We build good living environments | 14 |
| 3. We build family-friendly municipalities | 17 |
| The best interests of the child must guide family policy decisions | 17 |
| High-quality early childhood education | 19 |
| Every child must know how to read and count | 20 |
| Every young person deserves a place in further education | 23 |
| 4. Wellbeing makes economic sense | 24 |
| Municipalities as promoters of wellbeing and health | 24 |
| An exercising municipality will do well | 25 |
| Wellbeing from culture | 27 |
| In conclusion | 29 |



No compromises **ON THE ESSENTIALS**

We Christian Democrats want to keep the entire Finland vibrant.

There are 308 municipalities in Finland, all different. We see diversity as an asset. We believe that a successful municipality knows how to create opportunities for success based on its own strengths. Maintaining the vitality of the entire Finland is important for security of supply and safety.

Many changes challenge municipalities to boldly innovate. These include, among others, low birth rates, migration, economic pressures and changing geopolitical situations. Building the vitality of municipalities requires cooperation across the region. In an increasingly fast-changing world, we must react with agility to new needs and situations. Knowledge-based management increases effectiveness and brings savings to municipalities.

Christian Democrats want to build municipalities on a sustainable foundation. Families and the elderly are close to our hearts. We invest in early childhood education and schools. Good conditions for work and entrepreneurship are the guarantee of a vibrant municipality. Responsible management of economy is important to us. If we live beyond our means now, future generations will pay the bill with interest.

We want to invest in nearby services. To provide services we need new solutions and opportunities to experiment flexibly. In addition to traditional services, creative, mobile, digital and responsive services must be found.

In economically challenging times, we must have the courage to innovate. Through actions, municipalities are built to look like their creators. You are the best expert in your surroundings, help us to create prosperous municipalities and regions. Let's build a Finland for generations together – *making no compromises on the essentials!*



1. THE BIG ISSUES IN DAILY LIFE ARE DECIDED NEARBY

We defend the autonomy of municipalities and the wellbeing services counties' right to organize services needed by their residents. The Christian Democratic principle of proximity means that decisions are made as close to the residents as possible. Municipal mergers must be carried out on a voluntary basis. Democracy requires that municipal and wellbeing services county councils, boards and committees, divisions and cooperation groups offer the opportunity for sufficiently broad political and regional representation.

We are for expanding cooperation between municipalities, wellbeing services counties, companies and organizations in providing services. Cooperation is important in services where municipalities and wellbeing services counties share responsibility, such as promoting health and wellbeing.



The voices of children, young people, the elderly and people with disabilities must be heard in decision-making. Children and young people must be educated in democracy. Youth councils, disability councils and senior citizens' councils are the statutory advocacy bodies in municipalities and wellbeing services counties. They are the voice of the groups they represent, communicate needs, make suggestions and provide feedback on the functionality of services. They enhance the residents' participation.

New technology offers good opportunities to develop municipal democracy. Participatory budgeting and surveys are commonplace in many municipalities. Giving feedback should be easy. The municipality must be active on social media channels. Public online council meetings ensure the transparency of decision-making. Use of artificial intelligence can enhance the transparency and efficiency of administrative processes. Municipalities should urgently apply artificial intelligence, robotization and other new technologies and develop new ones in cooperation with other municipalities.

We Christian Democrats value community spirit, volunteerism and resident activism. The role of regional residents' associations and village committees should increase. We want to empower them to participate in decision-making. We are actively involved in bringing residents together. In many places volunteers create events, such as theme days for food or cleaning, or sports events, block parties and other community events that are both useful and fun. Municipalities should encourage and enable all efforts to create community spirit.



2. FINLAND'S VITALITY IS GENERATED IN MUNICIPALITIES

Local governments' economic prospects are difficult

Municipal finances are strained by many statutory obligations.

Although social and health services and rescue services were transferred to wellbeing services counties in 2023, municipalities still have a statutory obligation to promote the wellbeing and health of their residents together with the wellbeing services county. Employment services are an important new responsibility.

In addition, municipalities can take on other autonomous tasks. These are the most significant tasks of municipalities:

- schools and early childhood education,
- cultural, youth, library and sports services,
- non-mandatory education including community colleges,
- land use and planning,



- water and waste management,
- street construction and maintenance,
- building control,
- traffic and public transport,
- environmental services,
- promoting wellbeing and health
- safety and preparedness,
- economic policy and employment services
- integration,
- organising elections and promoting opportunities for residents to participate.

As a significant employer, the municipalities must invest in good human resources management and the wellbeing of its personnel. Attracting and retaining healthy, competent and motivated personnel requires good human resource management. It can prevent sickness absence and the related costs. The municipality must be a competitive employer. Skilled and committed personnel enables high-quality and cost-effective service production.

Many municipalities have had to take measures to balance their economies. The poor economic outlook is due to demographic shifts, increased need for renovation and construction, and increased obligations on municipalities. These have led to significant indebtedness in many municipalities. At the end of 2022, local governments had loans of almost 25 billion euros, equivalent to nine percent of gross domestic product. The most indebted municipalities have a debt of almost 20,000 euros per inhabitant. Indebtedness is particularly challenging for small municipalities. The ratio between a municipality's debt obligations and income is essential.

We consider balancing local government finances important. Taking more debt is a serious matter; we promote responsible financial management. We must improve the productivity of local government. Investments in basic services that improve the vitality of a municipality and increase the wellbeing of its residents can be financed with debt.

We need to be determined to overcome municipal indebtedness.

Expenditure cuts, tax increases, cooperation, municipal mergers and reduced investments are ways to balance the economy. Above all, we must boldly seek new, more efficient and productive ways to provide services so that cutting costs does not mean cutting services. It is important that each municipality has an up-to-date real estate strategy that aims at saving energy and using space efficiently.

The social and healthcare reform transferred income and costs to wellbeing services counties but left debts to the municipalities.

In many municipalities, leasing financing used for construction investments shifts financial problems to future taxpayers. In simple terms, leasing is a rental agreement in which an external financier builds a school or sports centre, and the municipality is the tenant. The agreement usually includes the tenant's obligation to purchase the property.

In the coming years, many social and healthcare properties will become obsolete.

This is problematic for municipalities that have no more use for these properties, but the unamortized balance sheet values and potential liabilities affect the municipality's finances. We propose that municipalities and wellbeing services counties sell these properties at their balance sheet value to Maakuntien Tilakeskus Oy, which can prepare property investment plans for the real estate stock. Let us treat people and not manage walls!

Productive municipal assets, such as energy companies, must not be privatized to cover deficits.

Water supply and other essential services must be publicly owned. Security of supply must be ensured. Natural monopolies should not be privately owned. Responsible management requires long-term plans and repair investments.

The reform of the municipal financing system started in autumn 2023.

According to Petteri Orpo's government programme, the municipal financing and government subsidy system will be reformed to better suit the municipalities after the social and healthcare reform and the TE reform. This new legislation is slated to enter into force on 1 January 2027.



A vibrant municipality has entrepreneurship and work

We will build vibrant and successful municipalities relying on their own strengths. The differences between municipalities gets accentuated. More than half of the municipalities have fewer than 6,000 inhabitants, with low birth rates challenging future vitality. On the other hand, large cities continue to grow strongly, because of internal and external migration, and they face completely different challenges. We need new ways to enhance vitality and provide services. Local knowledge brings best results in strengthening vitality.

The prerequisites for employment and entrepreneurship essential for vitality. Small and medium-sized businesses have the greatest growth potential and opportunities for hiring. Strong businesses mean strong municipal economy, which rises or falls with the success of employment. Only a strong municipal economy enables high-quality services.

Versatile services and attractive city centre mean a vibrant city. Reasonable rents in city housing, good public transport and easy parking benefit shops and the vitality of city centres as well as various activities and events. Pop-up stores help to promote businesses. Vibrant cities provide vitality to the entire region.

Maintaining the vitality of municipal centres is important. Functioning services and housing construction in the city centre enhances the vitality of smaller municipalities and attracts tourists and leisure residents.

The municipality acts as a platform to enable investments and jobs. The municipality is an enabler, with easily and quickly accessible services that cover the different stages of entrepreneurship. Permits, zoning, infrastructure, employment services and training must meet the needs of companies. Vitality is also created through land use, housing and public transport. A functioning community structure, attractive residential areas and good traffic planning enhance the municipality's holding power and attractiveness.

Services must be efficient and competitive with services offered by other municipalities and businesses. Municipal service processes must be more efficient and economical, i.e. through digital services. Cooperation between municipalities and the county is the key to the success of the region. Cooperation in tourism and rural services is important. Municipalities should receive a larger share of tax and fee revenues than they currently do, which would reduce dependence on government subsidies and encourage more effective economic policy.

Economic policy through cooperation with various actors. These include educational institutions, research units, financial institutions, and other organizations and municipal corporations that provide business services. Vouchers for business services and summer jobs accelerate this cooperation. An active municipal councillor networks also with businesses, education providers, and other actors in the area.

A municipality and its subsidiaries may form a municipal enterprise group. It covers all municipally owned companies and other organizations with economic activities that the municipality can influence through its ownership. A municipal group can include property management, water supply, waste management and commercial establishments. The municipal enterprise group ensures that the finances and operations of the municipality and the companies it owns are efficient and have sufficient resources to provide the necessary services to the residents.

Good corporate finances require a clear strategy, careful supervision and close financial monitoring. Useful municipal group finance is well managed and efficient. It can improve the productivity of municipal services, enable better risk management and provide flexible financing solutions. A poorly managed municipal group can lead to complex management problems, financial risks and poorly allocated resources.



Good public procurement brings efficient services

We favour expanding cooperation between municipalities, counties and companies in providing services. The public sector needs cooperation with companies and organisations. Our approach to purchasing services is pragmatic. The best way to provide services is the one that most benefits the people. Accurate data is needed when comparing the cost of municipal service production with other private or public services. The taxes we pay must be used efficiently.

Healthy competition ensures cost-effective and high-quality services. Procurement impacts the region's economy, employment and the viability of businesses. Wise procurement promotes the vitality of the region. A procurement strategy and investing in procurement expertise is necessary. Public procurement must use appropriate criteria and, in addition to overall cost-effectiveness, consider locality, safety, traceability, innovation, social criteria, life-cycle costs and effectiveness. Public procurement must consider sustainability criteria and locality within the procurement legislation, for example by favouring healthy organic and local food. The Procurement Act allows submitting partial bids in competitive tenders, which is good for smaller businesses.

Market dialogue, concrete support and advice help local SMEs to participate in public tenders. We must promote the possibility of groups of professionals to participate in tenders. Even smaller tenders must be communicated well in advance.

Using in-house companies may enhance efficiency. The use of in-house companies has become more common in recent years. This is justified to efficiently produce support services, i.e. general and financial administration, ICT services, waste management, food supply, social and health services and property maintenance, when these sectors do not have a functioning market in the region. However, this should not be used to circumvent the Procurement Act, as it can distort healthy markets that bring vitality to the region.

Employment management and successful integration are a great opportunity

Municipalities now manage employment services, and they can invest in employment through tailored training. Starting 2025, employment areas organise employment services. There are 45 employment areas in Finland, some manage one, others several municipalities. The employment services reform aims to expedite the employment of workers through a new service structure and to increase the productivity, availability, effectiveness and versatility of employment and business services.

Now municipalities can tailor their employment services to meet local needs. This opportunity should be fully utilized. Successful employment management is based on matching the region's labour needs, educational opportunities, and the abilities and skills or needs of the local people. The effects of the reform and development needs must be mapped out on a regional basis.

We Christian Democrats want to set ambitious goals for employment management. Municipalities now can act as soon as unemployment begins, when employment measures are most effective. Employment of young people must be quick and efficient to prevent exclusion. Employment is the best form of integration. Municipalities organise both employment and education services, providing synergy benefits and insight in the life situation of especially the youth. Health, rehabilitation and employment services for example for people with disabilities must be planned together with wellbeing services counties.

Meeting individual needs requires diverse employment services. We see a need for a variety of tools, as situations vary. Deregulation of employment services meets this need. This flexibility is an opportunity to use resources to best meet the needs of the municipality. To lower the threshold for entrepreneurship, municipal employment activities can include advisory services by cooperatives or cooperation with 4H activities. Private personnel companies can help job seekers who are "ready" for the labour market. Similarly, organizations



can offer municipalities a partnership in low-threshold employment services.

Working life participation must be increased at the beginning, middle and end of careers. Shortage of manpower challenges the public and private sector. Municipalities can provide attractive living environments and functional services for families. Moving to another municipality requires that the whole family is considered. A job for the spouse and good schools may be decisive. We need better opportunities for part-time work and flexibility for those caring for a family member or having limited capabilities. Employers with flexible working hours and other terms are better at meeting the needs of families. We should promote the employment of older people and utilize the skills of retirees who want to continue working.

The new Integration Act (KOTO24) and the TE reform entered into force simultaneously. Municipalities now have overall responsibility for promoting integration as of January 1, 2025. Effective integration prevents the marginalisation of immigrants. It is important to include immigrants, especially women, in communities at work, in schools and hobbies. It is key that immigrants learn about Finnish legislation, culture and values. This way they understand their own responsibilities and rights and become active members of society. Learning Finnish or Swedish is of paramount importance for successful integration.

The municipality is responsible for the integration of unemployed job seekers and immigrants outside the work force. Services for immigrant job seekers are organized by the employment area. The municipality provides the services for immigrants outside of work force and decides how this is organised, either on its own or together with other municipalities.

We build good living environments

Good housing is important for the residents and the municipality. We need diverse and sustainably designed residential areas and housing solutions that support the wellbeing and inclusion of their residents.

Christian Democrats want to keep the entire country populated, vibrant and involved in development. Remote and hybrid working and distance learning have become more common. They make it easier to live in sparsely populated areas. A vibrant countryside and agriculture are an important part of security of supply and national identity: All of Finland benefits from them. In the coming years, the decentralization of production, such as 3D printing, decentralization of energy production, transport drones and robotized transport make living in the countryside ever easier.

We want to keep city centres pleasant. Many cities have a lot to improve on the quality and safety of pedestrian routes. Cycling and walking are good for health, environment, economy and, in big cities, save time. City bikes are excellent for ecology and health. Outdoor lighting must be good, and the problems with electric scooters tackled. Accessibility and promoting the mobility of the elderly are important.

The MAL agreement procedure enhances joint planning of land use, housing and transport throughout the urban area. The MAL agreement procedure means long-term planning at the metropolitan level and commitment to regional goals. Through the procedure, small municipalities gain access to the know-how of central cities and ministries. In MAL urban areas, growth is concentrated in the central city and its fringes. However, the expanding opportunities for influence and know-how to the surrounding municipalities is a key benefit and supports broader planning of urban areas. In MAL negotiations, decisions made nearby are important. Influence of the residents and decision-makers throughout the region must be ensured, the central city must not have all the power. We Christian Democrats want to enable housing in the countryside and ensure the



maintenance of rural roads, which is also important for the security of supply.

Zoning is key in developing urban and rural municipalities.

Well-implemented zoning supports sustainable development, diverse housing solutions and the community spirit of residents. It considers economic and social aspects as well as special housing needs, i.e. those of the elderly. Zoning processes must be open and communicated in a timely manner. We want to improve the residents' possibilities to influence by participating in the zoning process at an early stage. A comfortable and clean living environment, local nature and green areas are of great importance for living comfort and wellbeing in general. We must provide outdoor areas suitable for pets. Preserving local nature must be a high priority in zoning. Zoning must be based on comprehensive cost and impact assessments, impartial reports and studies, and consideration of the legal protection of landowners.

The municipality is a key player in sustainable land use planning and in promoting energy efficiency, the circular economy and sustainable development.

The municipality must set strategic goals to protect natural areas, soil, water bodies, air and climate, and to reduce environmental hazards, noise and indoor air problems. The landowners must be compensated for the restrictive effects of zoning on forestry, for example. Mining activities must not be planned in the vicinity of important natural sites. Solar panels and electric batteries must be installed in municipal properties. As electric vehicles increase, more charging points are needed. Municipalities' own transport vehicles and work machines must gradually include electricity, hydrogen, biogas and other sustainable solutions.

Housing costs include construction and repair costs, property taxes, water and waste charges, energy costs and property maintenance costs.

Reasonable property taxes do not excessively burden low-income residents.

A functioning road and rail network is a prerequisite for maintaining the vitality of the whole of Finland. A good transport system is safe and environmentally friendly. Public transport must meet the needs of residents and promote its use. Reasonable public transport must also be maintained outside urban areas.

We must reduce the amount of household, industrial and construction waste and enhance waste sorting and recovery as part of circular economy. The Hinku calculation of climate emissions used by municipalities should also include emissions from construction and consumption. In public construction, it is good to favour carbon-binding materials, such as wood, and in concrete construction, to use cements with smaller carbon dioxide emissions and carbon-binding ones. Renovating buildings must be preferred over demolishing them. Due to the concentration of jobs and services, new construction in centres is increasing at the same time as rural housing stock is left empty. This is neither ecological nor economic.

Wind farms must be situated considering the visual and noise nuisance for residents. Some municipalities have stricter regulations on the minimum distance between wind farms and residential buildings than the current law.

The state, municipalities, and businesses must update their preparedness plans for various crises. The wellbeing of residents and the functionality of infrastructure must be ensured in case of disruptions. Rapid response in exceptional circumstances requires operational crisis organizations, reviewing different scenarios and regular training. Important resources include mental crisis resilience, which is strengthened in cooperation with the third sector and parishes.

Excessive technology-dependency of buildings must be avoided. Residential buildings must be habitable even when electricity or telecommunications networks are down. In rural areas, the construction of fireplaces in new homes as a backup heat source must be recommended.



3. WE BUILD FAMILY-FRIENDLY MUNICIPALITIES

The best interests of the child must guide family policy decisions

The foundation of wellbeing is created in childhood and youth. Investments in children and youth are investments in the future. This is so even when the municipality's difficult financial situation forces us to prioritize and find savings. Child impact assessment, child budgeting and listening to the views of children and youth are important in decision-making.

The low birth rate and deteriorating dependency ratio are very serious issues for society. In many municipalities, the number of inhabitants is decreasing, while the number of the elderly is increasing, and the number of minors is falling. This development has major impacts on municipal services. Improving the birth rate requires broad-based actions and a

change in mindset. We can promote child-friendliness through political decisions but also in the workplace and in our daily lives.

We are building a child-friendly society where families feel supported and secured. The best interests of children must guide family policy decisions. Parenthood is one of the most important tasks, which must be reflected in decision-making. The parents' primary right and duty is to raise their children, which society must support. Fitting together working and caregiving must be promoted, for example by enabling part-time work for those who want it.

We need preventive and timely support through low-threshold basic services. Municipalities and wellbeing services counties must work together to provide services for children and families. Combating child poverty must be included in joint social and healthcare plans. Preventing the accumulation of problems and strengthening parents' resources help in avoiding heavy and expensive corrective measures. The municipality must be active in developing and implementing family centre activities. Services are provided across administrative and sector boundaries, in cooperation between the public and third sectors. We support the partnership between organisations and municipalities, i.e. in early childhood education, schools, educational institutions and leisure activities.

We invest in youth work. Youth work is a statutory task of the municipality, supporting the growth, independence and participation of young people. Many municipalities have made cuts in youth work to save money. Young people need safe places to convene and adults who value and encourage them and have time for them. Young people must not be left alone. Youth work can influence the youths' attitudes towards substance abuse and support their mental health.

Outreach youth work and youth workshops help young people in difficult life situations. They prevent problems and exclusion, which reduces the costs of corrective measures. Young people may need help and support in finding a place to study or work, developing study skills or improving life management. Especially in larger cities the focus must be preventing gangs and violence and



promoting integration. The third sector has a lot to offer in this work.

High-quality early childhood education

We must offer different options for childcare and freedom of choice between home care and daycare. Home care and daycare should not be set against each other, but the system should be more flexible and based on family needs. How to care for their children must be the families' own decisions.

Home care must be a real alternative for the youngest children through the municipal supplement to home care allowance. An increase in the municipal supplement will give families a realistic alternative to municipal daycare. This will free up daycare places for those who need them and curb the growth in early childhood education costs.

High-quality early childhood education is important. Early childhood education is a child's planned and goal-oriented upbringing, teaching and care, with an emphasis on pedagogy and provided by trained personnel. It can be offered in daycare, family daycare, at home or in educational activities, such as clubs.

We need sufficiently many childhood education professionals to ensure the safe care of children. Overly large groups of children make it hard for professional staff to pay attention to children in the way that each child needs. There is a shortage of professionals available, and shortage of staff often results from lack of funding. We must ensure that private and public daycares have enough personnel.

The wellbeing and permanence of employees impact the quality of early childhood education. Low salaries make it difficult to recruit workers and increases staff turnover. The salaries of early childhood education professionals must be raised to reflect the importance of the work and the training it requires. Early childhood education needs multi-professional expertise, especially in social and family work.

Immigrant children's participation in early childhood education must be encouraged. Participation improves their language skills in Finnish or Swedish, prepares them for school, and helps integration into Finnish society. We aim to have more of them participate.

Pre-school education must be of high quality and accessible to all preschoolers. The aim of pre-school education is to provide children with equal school readiness, regardless of their linguistic and skill levels. We welcome the expansion of voluntary two-year free pre-school education everywhere, if the results of the experiment, ending in 2025, show that it strengthens children's school readiness and basic education learning outcomes.

Parishes and daycare working together helps in reaching the goals of early childhood and preschool education. Getting to know Finnish traditions and Finland's Christian culture is an important part of early childhood and preschool education. According to the Finnish National Board of Education guidelines, daycares can organize religious events for children.

Every child must know how to read and count

Excellent and equal basic education is the cornerstone of Finnish society. The municipalities bear the greatest responsibility for the education of Finns; it is one of the most important tasks of municipalities. Nearly 60 percent of municipal budgets go to children and youth through this education pathway. The number of students in comprehensive school will drop by approximately 80,000 by 2030. This is a historic decrease in student numbers while the number of foreign-language students is increasing, but regional differences are large. Municipalities must safeguard children's educational rights despite these changes.

Municipalities must make a bold move to improve the quality of basic education. The resources used by municipalities for basic education vary considerably. We Christian Democrats want to develop high-quality education and secure a better future for young people. Our goal is to invest more in education than at present. High-quality



and diverse education is a competitive advantage for any municipality.

Basic education needs to go back to basics: We need to focus on literacy, restore a peaceful learning environment for students and teachers. Teachers' wellbeing and resilience have a significant impact on the atmosphere in schools and learning outcomes. The number of students per teacher in basic education must be reasonable, as small teaching groups best ensure learning, peaceful environment and teachers' resilience.

The use of mobile phones must be limited during the school day, as it hinders concentration and learning. Additional lessons in mathematics and Finnish or Swedish help learning the basic things. Special classes in arts and crafts, i.e. music, visual arts, expressive arts and physical education, are important. We must ensure sufficient resources for basic arts education. The right to study foreign languages regardless of place of residence, and the diversity and continuity of language learning, must be secured from primary school onwards.

Every child must have a safe school day and adequate learning support. The divide between high-achieving and low-achieving students has grown. Many families are struggling, and the inequality of students is growing. Help and support must be available in a timely manner. Learning differences due to residential area, family or socio-economic background must be narrowed and prevented with sufficient support. Improving the learning outcomes of students with an immigrant background needs resources.

In the government we are reforming support for learning to reduce learning gaps. Successful inclusion requires special education teachers and school counsellors. The goal of inclusion is to offer each learner the school path they need. Teaching must be of high quality and consider individual needs. Self-direction is not suitable for everyone, and teachers must be responsible for their students' learning. Individualized teaching that considers the student's individual strengths and weaknesses can be promoted with the help of artificial intelligence. Schools must prepare for the

transformation brought about by artificial intelligence and robotization, which will soon affect the lives of children and young people.

The wellbeing of pupils and students at school needs help. Effective cooperation with wellbeing services county in student and school health care is essential. Schools must offer low-threshold care for mental health. Preventing loneliness and bullying must be effective. Cooperation between home and school is important. Parents must be consulted through open and active interaction with them. Learning environments must be functional, safe and healthy. Many children and young people, even entire families, need support in life management. This affects teachers' actual teaching during the school day. Placing social workers in the schools enables teachers to focus on high-quality teaching. So-called "school grandparents" can also be easily approachable help and support for pupils.

We Christian Democrats favour the local school network. Distance education organised with neighbouring municipalities enables diverse and high-quality education and reduces the pressure on smaller schools to close. Digital education and digital learning platforms and solutions enable learning independent of time and place and cooperation between schools. The school network must be viewed across municipal borders. A good rural school network strengthens children's wellbeing and the vitality of rural areas, it keeps the area populated. The Christian Democrats' long-term goal of equal funding for schools will be achieved: starting 1 August 2025, private and public schools will receive the same state funding.

It is important to cherish Finnish Christian culture and traditions in schools. They help building one's own identity and understanding and appreciating other cultures. The Nativity pageant or the Summer Hymn are an important part of the cultural heritage of Finnish schools. Getting to know Finnish traditions and culture is also important for children with immigrant backgrounds and other children from different cultural backgrounds. No upbringing or education is free from worldview and values. Respecting the family's beliefs and values in both the content of education and practical arrangements is important. The realization of religious freedom must be secured at all levels of education.



Every young person deserves a place in further education

We must find a path to working life after basic education for everyone. Upper secondary education can take place in a vocational school, upper secondary school or as an apprenticeship. Individual learning paths meet the needs of different learners. Upper secondary education must ensure that there are sufficient support resources so that everyone can stay involved and graduate. We must ensure sufficient resources for learning support and student care at every level. The quality of teaching and competence requirements must be maintained in both upper secondary and vocational education.

Improving access to secondary education reduces exclusion. Vocational skills are the best way to prevent the exclusion of young people, so we must ensure the adequacy and geographical coverage of study places in both upper secondary and vocational schools. Secondary education must be available also in sparsely populated areas.

Upper secondary school and vocational school are developed considering their different tasks. Upper secondary school will be maintained as a general education institution, while vocational school will strengthen students' professional skills. Vocational education must meet workforce needs. We will focus on recruiting teachers for vocational schools and secure a regionally comprehensive network of education providers, including municipalities, joint municipal authorities, companies and foundations.

Upper secondary education opens entry to studies at university level. Offering a chance to study for as many young people as possible has a great social impact, especially as age groups shrink. Vocational and upper secondary education must be planned based on the needs of local businesses. Entrepreneurship education at different levels of education and cooperation between schools and businesses are important.



4. WELLBEING MAKES ECONOMIC SENSE

Municipalities as promoters of wellbeing and health

Municipalities and wellbeing services counties promote wellbeing and health. The social and healthcare reform, starting in 2023, has changed the tasks of municipalities in promoting wellbeing and health. The tasks of municipalities and wellbeing services counties include:

- 1/** appoint responsible parties for promoting wellbeing and health,
- 2/** set goals in strategic planning and define measures,
- 3/** assess and consider the impact of decisions on people's wellbeing and health by population group,
- 4/** monitor the wellbeing and health of its residents and the factors affecting them by region and population group,



- 5/ prepare a wellbeing report and plan for each council term,
- 6/ monitor and evaluate the measures taken and report on them annually to the council, and
- 7/ promote the operating conditions and influence of organisations.

Voluntary activities that increase wellbeing are promoted by providing operating grants and facilities, and through reduced property tax rates.

Wellbeing and health are promoted through broad cross-administrative measures. These measures are carried out in many sectors and together with local and regional actors. The wellbeing services county hosts annual regional negotiations on the objectives, implementation and monitoring of these measures. To implement them, municipalities and the wellbeing services county must have designated bodies, i.e. municipal and regional wellbeing working groups and wellbeing coordinators.

Municipalities and wellbeing services counties have a role in the treatment of substance abuse and other addictions. The effects of addictions should be tackled more strongly than at present. Addiction can be physical, psychological, social or all of these. It is important to offer help to those suffering from addictions, train personnel to increase awareness of addictions and intervene in problems. We are against establishing rooms designated for drug use, this would be associated with significant problems, related to safety, legality and reducing drug use.

An exercising municipality will do well

Municipalities provide the conditions for physical activity. They organise services and activity that promote health and wellbeing, support civic activities, and build and maintain sports facilities. Physical activity promotes the wellbeing and functional capacity of individuals, and it positively impacts the vitality and economy of communities. Top-level sports, important for the sports enthusiasts, start at the local level.

Exercise is an effective and affordable way to prevent and treat most common diseases. According to estimates, the annual costs of inactivity and sedentary lifestyles exceed 4.7 billion euros. As our population ages and functional capacity declines generation after generation, promoting exercise and making it ever more available is key.

Decisions, resources and personnel skills must consider different types of exercisers, such as families with children, people with disabilities and the elderly. An exercising municipality maintains and builds diverse opportunities for different sports and different groups of people, taking accessibility into account. We want schools to be multi-purpose buildings that are also used by residents of different ages outside of school hours. Investments are needed to increase low-threshold exercise so that exercise becomes a natural part of everyday life. Reduced price groups for swimming pools and gyms are a significant support for special groups, such as pensioners, the unemployed and family caregivers. Free public exercise services, i.e. outdoor gyms, lower the threshold for exercise. Exercise advice linked to lifestyle guidance is needed for different age and population groups.

Municipalities play a significant role in enabling physical activity, which requires sufficient funding and investment in cooperation between different actors. Exercising is promoted financially in many ways, i.e. by offering affordable or free sports facilities and granting subsidies to sports clubs and organisations. Municipal grants application and organising sports events must be made easy. It is important to build and develop cooperation between sports operators, the social and healthcare sector and municipalities. Cooperation between municipal sports and leisure services, health and social care operators and wellbeing services counties must be strengthened to promote physical activity.

We want every child and young person to exercise in school and have a chance for regular sports activities. The courtyards of daycare centres and schools must promote physical activity, and we must ensure safety on the way to school. The Finnish model of



school clubs and the Liikkuvat (Moving) package, must be adopted in all schools. We want to promote free and affordable physical activity and cultural services for children and young people especially those from low-income families.

Wellbeing from culture

Culture is present in all human activities. A childhood fairy tale moment at the library. A school trip to a concert. Learning a new language at a community college. Culture is a part of life in different ways at different stages, and it has great social and economic significance. It reflects the phenomena of the times, challenges people and societies to move forward. In uncertain times, the need for culture and community is emphasized. We want to cherish traditional Christian culture as part of Finnish national identity and values.

The cultural policy in decision-making is broad. Municipalities are significant supporters of museums and art institutions: for example, more than half of museums are municipal. Decision-makers must consider the effects on wellbeing of culture and art and include culture in the social and health sectors. We support cross-sectoral cooperation.

We defend the continuity, development, resources and accessibility of adult education throughout the country. Adult education is part of the municipality's education and welfare services. Open universities, folk high schools and community colleges offer adult education. Adult education promotes continuous learning and re-training. It offers opportunities for studying in different life situations and regardless of the student's social status. Customer fees must be reasonable and, if necessary, subsidised by discounts to make it accessible to all. Independent study increases employment opportunities, health and overall wellbeing.

We secure libraries that promote and cherish education, literacy and Finnish culture. We invest in high-quality library services, especially library e-book services, to make them widely available in cooperation between municipalities. We promote self-service

libraries and increase the lending of library equipment, such as tools. Cooperation between schools and daycares with libraries sparks interest in reading and strengthens literacy. Resources for libraries must be secured in every part of the country to improve the residents' literacy.

Libraries to offer digital guidance and advice. Digital skills are important civic skills, as more and more public and commercial services have moved partially or completely online. Digital accessibility requires meeting the needs of many groups of people, such as the elderly.



IN CONCLUSION

Smooth cooperation between elected officials and office holders, guided by the strategy, is important. The quality of cooperation affects the municipality's reputation and image as an employer. A clear common understanding of the roles and tasks of the parties results in good management and achieving goals. Success amid changes requires utilising collected data in decision-making, i.e. so-called knowledge-based management, and developing management methods and budgeting based on appropriations. The decision-makers must have sufficient information on the real prices of service production and compare operating models with other municipalities.

For us Christian Democrats, trust, honesty and respect for others are important values that guide our work. As elected officials, we want to build understanding between those who think differently. We think long term and strive to find the best solutions for the municipality. You learn by doing, no one is born ready. Mistakes happen and we learn from them. We want to promote the common good – *without compromising on the essentials!*

